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25X1

29 October 1963

LAOS WEEKLY SITUATION REPORT
(Information as of 1000 EST 29 October)

I. Political

- A. Souvanna slated for talks with Khrushchev tomorrow; then to Delhi and Nehru: Premier Souvanna has indicated that he will call upon Khrushchev to support a stronger International Control Commission (ICC) in Laos. ICC effectiveness to date has been limited by the obstructionism of the Polish delegate, Marek Thee. Souvanna recently speculated that the reason Khrushchev is reluctant to press for enforcement of the Geneva Accords is his fear of "losing face" should his efforts fail and his lack of influence over Hanoi become evident.
- B. US Embassy suspects Pathet Lao may demand elimination of Air America operations as price for release of survivors of 5 September shutdown:
1. The US Embassy feels that the Pathet Lao may be planning a strong propaganda attack on Air America, and possibly demand that the company cease its operations into Laos prior to the release of the five survivors of the C-46 shot down on 5 September. On 25 October Pathet Lao leader Souphannouvong reiterated that the survivors were being "well taken care of." He did not, however, give any indication as to when they might be released.
 2. Communist radio propaganda has given somewhat conflicting indications as to the next Pathet Lao moves in this matter. On 18 October, Hanoi Radio quoted a Pathet Lao spokesman as stating that the men were "prisoners of war" and "must be arraigned." On 21 October, a Communist-controlled station in Laos quoted a Pathet Lao spokesman as saying that the survivors might "be handed over to the American Embassy in Vientiane."

DPMO reviewed. No
redactions indicated by
DPMO or CIA.

State Department review completed

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25X1

3. The episode points to the extreme sensitivity of the Pathet Lao over the continuing resupply of minority guerrilla forces located behind Communist "lines" in northern and eastern Laos. For over a year the Pathet Lao has protested these flights, claiming they violate not only the noninterference provision of the Geneva Accords but also the principle of unanimity first spelled out in the Plaine des Jarres agreements of June 1962 which set up the coalition government. The existence of these guerrilla units constitutes a continuing threat to key supply arteries into Laos from North Vietnam, as well as a direct challenge to Pathet Lao claims of control over large areas of Laos' northern provinces.

III. Military

A. Operations:

1. Neutralist forces have been engaged in clearing operations in the region between Vientiane and Vang Vieng. On 24 October FAR and Neutralist forces joined for mop-up activities near Ban Lang Houan [redacted] At the same time, elements of the Neutralist Special Guerrilla Battalion have been moving against Pathet Lao units in the area west of Ban Vang Khy [redacted]
[redacted]
2. On the Plaine des Jarres intermittent artillery exchanges and small-scale skirmishes continue. However, there have been no important positional changes and little material damage is reported.
3. North of Ban Ban, the Neutralists on 21 October lost the small outpost of Ban Tha [redacted] to a force comprising two Pathet Lao companies. On 25 October Meo and Neutralist units recaptured the village. Clashes between Meo and Pathet Lao forces have been reported on Phou San, a mountain about 20 kilometers to the west of Ban Ban.

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4. Farther south, in the Nhommarath area, there have been persistent reports of Communist preparations for military activity. To date, however, it has been all smoke and no fire.

B. Logistics: There are continuing reports of truck convoys moving into Laos along key re-supply arteries.

1. Most of the activity has been noted on Route 7 between Nong Het and Khang Khay, although some trucks have been reported along Route 12 leading to Boung Bao and on Route 8 to Lak Sao.
2. Scattered reports indicate that movement is continuing as well along Route 12-A, which leads into southern Laos, and on Route 9 between Tchepone and Muong Phine. While some of this latter traffic is probably in support of Communist operations in south Laos, a substantial amount may be directed toward the support of Viet Cong activities in South Vietnam.

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Next 1 Page(s) In Document Exempt